

SUBSTANCE ABUSE FACT SHEET: SECTION 35 ADMISSIONS

Massachusetts Department of Public Health, Bureau of Substance Abuse Services

This fact sheet provides information on female Section 35 admissions to substance abuse treatment services. Data were reported to the Massachusetts Department of Public Health, Bureau of Substance Abuse Services Management Information System in FY 2003.^{1, 2}

Massachusetts General Law, Chapter 123, Section 35:

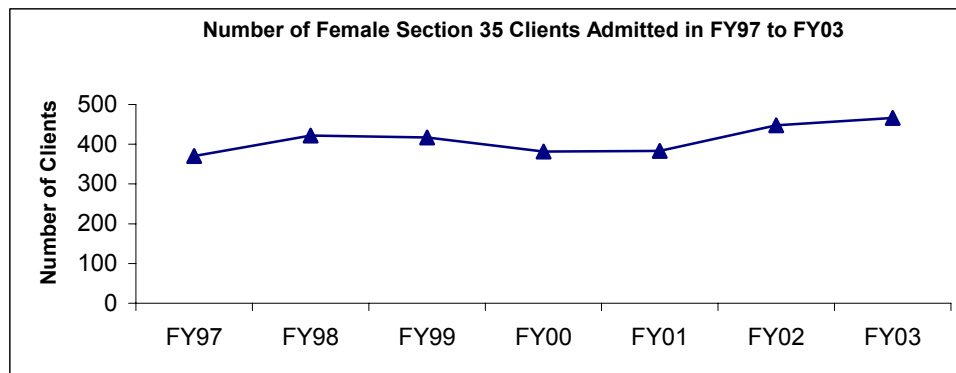
Allows for the civil commitment, to an inpatient treatment facility for up to 30 days, of alcoholics or substance abusers. Where "alcoholic" and "substance abuser" shall mean a person who chronically or habitually consumes alcoholic beverages or ingests controlled substances to the extent that (1) such use substantially injures his health or substantially interferes with his social or economic functioning, or (2) he has lost the power of self-control over the use of such beverages.³ **Please note:** The Massachusetts Department of Public Health Bureau of Substance Abuse Services collects and maintains treatment information on female Sect.35 admissions only.

Overall Treatment Admissions for Female Clients:

Women who have been civilly committed to substance abuse treatment represent a small proportion of the total female clients admitted to BSAS licensed treatment services in Massachusetts.

- In FY 2003, there were 33,123 total female clients admitted to substance abuse treatment.
- In FY 2003, there were 466 clients admitted due to civil commitment, representing approximately 1.4 % of all female clients. 70 of these clients were committed more than once for a total of 599 admissions.

The figure illustrates the trend of female Section 35 client admissions during fiscal years 1997 to 2003.



Characteristics of Section 35 Admissions:

Of these 466 female Section 35 clients who were admitted to substance abuse treatment

- 86% (402) were white, 8% (36) were black, 4% (19) were Latino, and the remaining 2% (9) indicated other racial/ethnic groups.
- The majority of the civilly committed female admissions were between the ages of 30 and 49 years old, with 30% (139) between the ages of 30 and 39 and 29% (137) between the ages of 40 and 49.
- 72% (336) either completed high school or reported some education beyond high school.
- 89% (415) were not employed at the time of admission.
- 30% (139) had no health insurance at the time of admission.
- 21% (100) were homeless at the time of admission.
- 57% (267) reported never having been married.
- 50% (233) were parents of children 18 years old or younger.
- 89% (416) reported prior substance abuse treatment admissions.

Primary Substance of Use:

In FY 2003, Section 35 admissions reported alcohol and heroin most often as the primary drug for which they were committed. Of the 466 civilly committed female clients:

- 50% (232) reported alcohol as primary substance of use.
- 30% (139) reported heroin as primary substance of use.
- 7% (33) reported cocaine as primary substance of use.
- 5% (23) reported crack as primary substance of use.
- 8% (39) reported other drugs as primary substance of use.

Reason for Discharge:

Of these 466 female Section 35 clients who were admitted to substance abuse treatment

- 71% (331) completed their Section 35 Commitment.
- 11% (51) eloped from the program.
- The remaining 18% (84) were discharged for other reasons including administrative discharges, noncompliance, hospitalization, moved and transfers to courts.

Length of Stay:

In FY 2003, the average length of stay for substance abuse treatment of the 466 Section 35 clients was 20 days, with a range from 1 day to 56 days. 45% of these clients had stayed from 20 to 30 days.

The following information was available for 282 of 466 Section 35 female clients.

Petitioner Information:

- For 66% (187) of 282 female clients, the family was the petitioner.
- For 27% (75) of 282 female clients, a court, the probation, or the police was the petitioner.
- For 7% (20) of 282 female clients, a doctor was the petitioner.

Pending Criminal Charges:

Of the 282 clients, 44% (131) had pending charges, another 45% (135) reported no pending charges and 11% (33) did not know if they had pending criminal charges.

Health and Psychiatric Status:

- 66% (187) of 282 clients had a psychiatric diagnosis.
- 10% (27) of 274 clients received medical intervention during their Section 35 commitment.
- 48% (136) of 282 clients reported prior psychiatric treatment.

Prepared by:

Massachusetts Department of Public Health, Bureau of Substance Abuse Services
Office of Statistics and Evaluation

¹ SAMIS data include information reported by all BSAS licensed substance abuse treatment programs. These data include admissions to BSAS licensed programs that may be reimbursed by Medicaid or other public payers.

² More details regarding Section 35 admissions are obtained through the Supplemental Section 35 MIS data collection forms. These data are linked with SAMIS data to produce information for this fact sheet. Records from both systems are only available on a subset of clients as noted in the text.

³ General Laws of Massachusetts Part I, Title XVII, Chapter 123, Section 35. From Mass General Law website.